

1<sup>st</sup> October 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Families

We are writing this letter to give you important information about illegal and/or banned substances.

**We have a zero tolerance approach to the supply, the distribution and the consumption of any banned or illegal drug and/or alcohol on our school site. Zero tolerance includes vaping, smoking, taking a tablet or capsule form of a drug, snorting or chewing drugs, the injection of drugs and drugs in liquid forms or diluted into drinks. Any contravention of our behaviour policy in this area is a serious breach of our policy and may result in permanent exclusion.**

**We urge you to be aware of the risks and dangers around the easy availability of drugs/substances on our streets and online. We urge vigilance on your part.**

**Out of school hours: Be very aware of your child's use of their phone (if they have one), of who they interact with online or face-to-face and of course, of their whereabouts if you allow them to meet friends or spend time away from your supervision.**

The police regularly alert us to important public safety concerns. We have a police liaison officer. We have been made aware that THC (a very potent form of cannabis) is being sold to young people in the inner city areas of Birmingham including Small Heath and Bordesley Green. It is sold as cheaply as £10 for a vial, which could be affordable to children and young people tempted to buy it. It is being sold online and also face-to-face. THC is commonly consumed in a vape or even put into a drink such as boost, red bull or a fizzy drink like Lucozade or coca cola. More factual information about cannabis including THC is below.

All schools have a duty of care to safeguard pupils and staff. We do our very best with the information that we know about and the systems, policies and procedures that we have in place to keep everyone safe and to prevent issues. We are reliant on pupils making sensible decisions, good choices and also following our guidance and the school's behaviour policy.

We educate our pupils about the dangers of drugs and alcohol via personal, social, economic and health education (PSHE) and in science, and we reiterate key messages.

These are some of the anti-drugs activities that we have carried out so far since 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021:

1. PSHE session the week of the 6<sup>th</sup> September years 7-11
2. Pupil code of conduct and behaviour policy taught to pupil's week of 6<sup>th</sup> September years 7-11
3. Principal's drug and alcohol assembly years 7-13 on 27<sup>th</sup> September
4. PSHE session on drugs education years 7-13 on 27<sup>th</sup> September
5. PSHE session on drugs education years 7-13 on 1<sup>st</sup> October

We have more activities planned over the coming weeks and months across the primary, secondary and sixth form phases to promote safety, health and good decision making.

We are hoping that this letter not only raises awareness of the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and the easy availability to young people in Birmingham, but emphasises the responsibilities of pupils, parents, families and schools to keep our young people safe. We all need to work closely together to make sure that our children and young people say no to drugs, make sensible decisions and choices, look after their mental and physical health and wellbeing, comply with our school behaviour policy and comply with the law.

At the end of this letter we have included some information for you to read including signposting to further support.

Yours sincerely,

*S. Dosanjh*

Mrs S Dosanjh  
Principal – Primary Phase



Mrs A Lloyd  
Principal - Secondary and Sixth Form Phase

### Drugs Information for Pupils, Parents, Carers and Families

#### What is THC and what are the dangers of THC?

THC Tetrahydrocannabinol is **the main psychoactive compound in marijuana. IT IS VERY POTENT.** It is what makes people feel "high." There are two types of cannabinoid receptors in our bodies. THC binds with receptors -- mostly in the brain -- that control pain, mood, and other feelings.

THC can induce hallucinations, change thinking and cause delusions. On average, the effects last about two hours, and kick in 10 to 30 minutes after ingestion. Psychomotor impairment may continue after the perceived high has stopped, however. In some cases, reported side effects of THC include elation, anxiety, tachycardia, breathlessness, loss of consciousness, vomiting, nausea, dizziness, short-term memory recall issues, inability to move, heart attacks and rarely, but can, death.

#### The dangers of E-Cigarettes/Vaping pens or pipes

- The use of e-cigarettes/vape devices is unsafe for kids, teens, and young adults.
- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s.
- E-cigarettes can contain other harmful substances besides nicotine.
- Young people who use e-cigarettes may be more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future.
- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine—the addictive drug in regular cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products.
- A recent study found that 99% of the e-cigarettes sold contained nicotine.

- Some e-cigarette labels do not disclose that they contain nicotine, and some e-cigarettes marketed as containing 0% nicotine have been found to contain nicotine.
- Nicotine can harm the developing adolescent brain. The brain keeps developing until about age 25.
- Using nicotine in adolescence can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control.<sup>1</sup>
- Each time a new memory is created or a new skill is learned, stronger connections – or synapses – are built between brain cells. Young people’s brains build synapses faster than adult brains. Nicotine changes the way these synapses are formed.
- Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs
- Some of the ingredients in e-cigarette aerosol could also be harmful to the lungs in the long-term. For example, some e-cigarette flavourings may be safe to eat but not to inhale because the gut can process more substances than the lungs.
- Defective e-cigarette batteries have caused some fires and explosions, a few of which have resulted in serious injuries.
- Children and adults have been poisoned by swallowing, breathing, or absorbing e-cigarette liquid through their skin or eyes. Nationally, approximately 50% of calls to poison control centres for e-cigarettes are for kids 5 years of age or younger.

## Cannabis

Cannabis (also known as marijuana, weed, pot, dope or grass) is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK.

The effects of cannabis can vary a lot from person to person. It can also vary depending on how much or how often it's taken and what it contains.

Some examples include:

- feeling chilled out, relaxed and happy
- laughing more or become more talkative
- feeling hunger pangs ("the munchies")
- feeling drowsy, tired or lethargic
- feeling faint or sick
- having problems with memory or concentrating
- experiencing hallucinations
- feeling confused, anxious or paranoid

## Can you get addicted to cannabis?

It is possible to get addicted to cannabis. If regular users stop taking cannabis, they may get withdrawal symptoms, such as feeling moody and irritable, feeling sick, difficulty sleeping, difficulty eating, sweating, shaking and diarrhoea.

Regularly smoking/taking cannabis with tobacco also increases the risk of becoming addicted to nicotine and experiencing withdrawal symptoms from nicotine as well as cannabis if you cut down or give up.

Regularly using tobacco also increases the risk of tobacco-related diseases such as cancer and coronary heart disease.

## Drug Support

- see a GP
- visit Frank's Find support page
- call Frank's free drugs helpline on 0300 123 6600
- Marijuana Anonymous is a free self-help group. Its "12 step" programme involves stopping using marijuana with the help of regular face-to-face and online support groups. You can call them on 0300 124 0373 (call back service).

## Cannabis and Mental Health

Regular cannabis use increases the risk of developing a psychotic illness, such as schizophrenia.

A psychotic illness is one where you have hallucinations (seeing things that are not really there) and delusions (believing things that are not really true).

The risk of developing a psychotic illness is higher in people who:

- start using cannabis at a young age
- smoke/inhale/consume stronger types
- take it regularly
- use it for a long time

Cannabis can also have other risk factors for schizophrenia, such as a family history of the illness

Cannabis also increases the risk of a relapse in people who already have schizophrenia, and it can make psychotic symptoms worse.

## Other risks of cannabis

Other risks of regularly using cannabis can include:

- feeling wheezy or out of breath
- developing an uncomfortable or painful cough
- making symptoms of asthma worse in people with asthma
- reduced ability to drive or operate machinery safely

If you drive while under the influence of cannabis, you're more likely to be involved in an accident. This is one reason why drug driving, like drink driving, is illegal.